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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work

Statement submitted by the Anglican Consultative Council, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2006/1

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Statement

The Anglican Communion and its Faith Perspective

We are 75 million Christians of 165 countries in the Anglican Communion, stretching from the United Kingdom to Southern Africa, from Australia to the Southern Cone, from the United States to the Philippines. More than half of our members are women grieved by the harsh consequences women and children face because of conflict, poverty, violence and the unexpected traumas of natural disasters. This solidarity in suffering is at the heart of our theology, and our commitment to justice and rebuilding is central to our faith.

Our five-fold Marks of Mission, adopted many years ago as basis of the worldwide work of the Anglican Communion are: (i) to proclaim the Good News of God's realm; (ii) to teach, baptize and nurture new believers; (iii) to respond to peoples' needs through loving service; (iv) to break down unjust structures to maintain peace and justice; and, (v) to strive to safeguard the integrity of God's creation and to sustain and renew the earth.

The UNCSW Themes This Year

1. Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work

As delegates to the UNCSW in 2004 as well as 2005, grassroots Anglican Women returned home to create and foster an enabling environment to address the social justice issues of the Beijing Platform for Action, building global and regional networks, holding conferences and speaking out against the patriarchal environment which perpetuates the feminization of poverty, the AIDS pandemic, the unequal access to quality education and the rampant incidence of violence against women at home and in war.

Within the sisterhood of Anglican women, as with women everywhere, the hope and prayer is that the United Nations, through its Commission on the Status of Women, continues to emphasize these critical issues which have such a dire effect on women. The BPfA and the MDGs must be in the forefront for as long as it takes to achieve the worthy goals which they incorporate. We are convinced that gender equality and the full participation of women will bring about the eradication of poverty and violence.

2. Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels

The network of Anglican women who attended the Commission on the Status of Women last year presented resolutions to the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) meeting which took place in Nottingham, England, in June 2005. The resolutions called for:

- affirmation of the work of the International Anglican Women's Network in responding to the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);

- acknowledgement of the MDG goal for equal representation of women in decision-making at all levels;
- identification of ways in which this goal could be incorporated into the structures of the ACC and all of its member churches; and,
- establishment of a women's desk in each Province of the ACC.

The resolutions were unanimously adopted, and the work of surveying the current status of women in the Anglican Communion has begun. Delegates to UNCSW 2006 will bring with them the statistics related to the percentages of women on decision-making bodies in their dioceses, their regions and their countries.

A critical examination of the structures by which the Communion measures its unity reveals that women hold a small percentage of the available positions. Clearly there is work to be done. This great disparity in terms of leadership and representation underscores the importance of the UNCSW as a forum for advocacy, sharing and strategy. Currently Anglican women are strategizing to assure that their statistic changes to one more closely resembling the 50 percent goal of this year's CSW theme. We are well aware that we are not alone in this effort and that we will be joining with women of faith everywhere.

The Mission of Anglican Women

As Anglican women drawn from across the global village, our mission principles compel us to speak and act with confidence and compassion as we create a world in which the lowly are raised up, the hungry are fed, the sick are healed, the innocent are protected and the oppressed are freed. Our work and our voices are an enduring contribution to UNCSW, to our civil governments and to our churches. We are proud to represent our Church, we are privileged to be part of UNCSW and, we are humbled by the opportunity to gather with women of all faith traditions and other Christian denominations. We are committed to the pursuit of gender justice for all women in all faith-based and civil institutions.

Our voices are clear on issues of peace and justice as we call for an end to global poverty, to the AIDS pandemic and to the abuse of women and children anywhere and everywhere. What we bring as women is our determination to continue to work and to pray for unconditional inclusion in all aspects of church life and leadership and an unshakeable faith belief that some day God's justice will prevail for all of God's people throughout the world.

God of Mercy, God of Love, God of Justice, Creator of the heavens and the earth, we pray your infinite blessings upon all who gather at the United Nations for the 50th anniversary of the Commission on the Status of Women. Help all who gather to see one another through eyes enlivened by compassion and enlightened by understanding. Help all who gather to hear one another with ears attuned to the cries of suffering. Open our hearts and enable our hands to be deliverers of mercy. Amen.